



LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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To: Superintendent
From: Chief Operating Officer
Date: October 31, 2022
Re: New business- Request for Draft Request for Proposal for HR Audit

As a follow-up to the discussion at the October 26, 2022 joint subcommittee meeting, I am attaching two options for consideration to further support the strategic work that is led by Human Resources.

1. The first option is a draft of a scope of work which could be used as part of a RFP for a third audit of HR functions. The language was based on a similar RFP recently awarded by the City. I would anticipate a cost in the range of \$15,000 to \$20,000 and a timeline of 3-4 months from initial posting to completion. Another audit can be particularly helpful in producing recommendations and guidance which have not already been presented or reported. However, I'm confident through the review and analysis of the 2018 HR Audit and 2022 HR Landscape Analysis by Human Resources, the School Committee, Superintendent, the Equity Office, our employees, and the public that we can identify several areas which we should focus on which have not yet already been sufficiently addressed. I'm concerned about the hundreds of hours of additional staff time which will be needed to support another audit. Typically, an audit involves interviewing HR staff members and senior administrators in order to develop recommendations and suggestions. We already have fully developed needs and need to devote further time and resources to these projects. While more recommendations and suggestions would be welcome, given the timing of the prior two audits, including the second one which was just completed several months ago, **I do not recommend this course of action.**

I have included the 2018 HR Audit and the 2022 HR Landscape Analysis in other motion responses within the School Committee's packet. There are recommendations from those studies which are currently being assessed and implemented. Many of the recommendations of the 2018 HR audit have already been implemented, including but not limited to evaluations for cafeteria personnel, building services personnel, paraprofessionals, and administrative assistants; the use of exit surveys and off-boarding checklists; and the hiring of additional personnel such as a HR Generalist and Safety Officer. Additionally, we are currently in the midst of incorporating software to create additional HR efficiencies, working through the City's implementation of bi-weekly pay, and will soon enter into Collective Bargaining with our unions. Additionally, we plan on

reissuing an RFP for a competitive wage study. We are also collaborating with the Chief Equity Officer on the implementation of a Diversity Hiring Index to provide more information to hiring authorities. Additionally, we are reviewing personnel policies which need to be considered for update by the Lowell School Committee.

2. The second option is an outline for a potential service agreement to train hiring managers and screening committee participants. The Chief Equity Officer and I had a very productive meeting with an entity which would be interested in this work. This is work that we know that we need to do and which will provide a positive impact; however, we are not currently equipped to focus on developing this training. The utilization of a contractor for this initiative would greatly speed up its utilization for use in the 2023/2024 hiring cycle. We would request training and the development of templates of rubrics to follow. **This option is recommended.** It would provide concrete recommendations and materials which will lead to further efficiencies and improvements.

At the October 26, 2022 subcommittee meeting, the subcommittee also requested recommendations on how to respond to questions and concerns from individuals who experience an adverse decision during the hiring process, i.e. were declined for an interview after applying for a job or were not selected. Overall, approximately 150 positions were posted and hired by Lowell Public Schools in preparation for the 2022-2023 school year. This includes the hiring of teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, principals, administrative assistants, and unaffiliated personnel. This does not include hundreds of tutors, part-time personnel, and substitute teachers that have also been hired and in-processed.

It is estimated that well over 2,000 people have applied for our positions over the last 6 months. While our goal is to bolster our applicant pool as much as possible, well over 1,500 applicants were unsuccessful in their job pursuits and received adverse hiring news from LPS during the last hiring cycle. At times, individuals who receive adverse news present questions and concerns regarding why they were not chosen for a job. Applicants who are not hired have the following channels to report any perceived concerns:

1. Contact HR who will review and explain the process and document the concern;
2. Contact the Chief Equity Officer to request a review of the process;
3. Contact the hiring agent or principal;
4. Contact their union, if applicable, who can review the process and discuss the matter with HR, and/or file a grievance or information request (if they determine such action is appropriate); and/or
5. File a grievance in accordance with their collective bargaining agreement, if applicable.

Any time a School Committee member has any concern about a hiring process, I request that it be reported to HR so that we can review the matter and make any necessary corrections, if warranted. Additionally, should an employee or applicant be concerned about a process or action, they are also encouraged to contact an HR representative to report their concern.

Option 1

SCOPE OF SERVICES

SUMMARY

The Lowell School Department is seeking proposals from qualified firms to conduct a comprehensive audit of the practices, procedures, and protocols of the Lowell Public School's Human Resources Department and how it is leveraged within the organization. Consultant to conduct detailed study of the HR Department and provide recommendations to ensure equity in the hiring process, identify opportunities to promote diversity and inclusion within the workforce, develop a plan to implement improvements determined to be necessary in the course of the audit, and produce a comprehensive report detailing all findings and recommendations. As part of this process, the qualified firm will review both the 2018 HR Audit and 2022 Landscape Analysis and make recommendations in regard to what recommendations should be prioritized for resourcing in the 2023-2024 budget process.

SCOPE

The City of Lowell seeks to obtain the services of a qualified firm to provide the specific services outlined herein. Best industry and/or management practices may require additional services not specifically described within this scope. The selected firm should identify and note any additional services recommended, provide pricing for them, and explain their necessity in the response.

1. The responding firm will act as a consultant and partner with senior and executive-level staff, including the Superintendent, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Equity Officer, and/or their designee. Methodology to obtain this information should be creative and exhaustive. Specific areas the City may require advice, counsel, recommendations, resources, research, and data may include but are not limited to the following:

a. A comprehensive review of the Human Resources department and core functions, with specific focus on the following areas:

- Assessment of Recruiting and Hiring Process: Examine existing hiring practices, including outreach and recruitment efforts, the application process, the interview process, verification of education and professional accreditations, maintenance of personnel data, and consider methods to modernize these processes in order to attract more qualified and diverse applicants.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Conduct an organizational diversity and inclusion assessment, including evaluating existing diversity and inclusion activities for impact; benchmarking and goal setting for inclusive effectiveness; measuring efficacy of interventions; recommendations for updates on key policies and practices in the Human Resources Department and across the organization. Develop and conduct training with regards to diversity and inclusion. Training shall contain content to specifically address current understanding and best practices with regards to diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and shall be intended to help remove barriers to diversity and inclusion that exist within the workplace, and increase the ability of staff to serve, work, and engage with people of all races and backgrounds. Provide additional specialized department-head and manager-level training to promote inclusion, and to spot instances of racism and/or discrimination, and train on how to provide remedies for these issues if they are found.

Option 2

SCOPE OF SERVICES

SUMMARY

The Lowell School Department is seeking proposals from qualified firms to produce training, which may include videos and other handouts, to be used in train hiring managers and screening committees on best and necessary practices to ensure equity in the hiring process, identify opportunities to promote diversity and inclusion within the workforce, and develop a plan to implement improvements determined to be necessary.

SCOPE

The City of Lowell seeks to obtain the services of a qualified firm to provide the specific services outlined herein. Best industry and/or management practices may require additional services not specifically described within this scope. The selected firm should identify and note any additional services recommended, provide pricing for them, and explain their necessity in the response.

1. The responding firm will act as a consultant and partner with senior and executive-level staff, including the Superintendent, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Equity Officer, and/or their designee. Methodology to obtain this information should be creative and exhaustive. Specific areas the City may require advice, counsel, recommendations, resources, research, and data may include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Develop and conduct training with regards to diversity and inclusion. Training shall contain content to specifically address current understanding and best practices with regards to diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and shall be intended to help remove barriers to diversity and inclusion that exist within the workplace, and increase the ability of staff to serve, work, and engage with people of all races and backgrounds. Provide additional specialized department-head and manager-level training to promote inclusion, and to spot instances of racism and/or discrimination, and train on how to provide remedies for these issues if they are found.
 - b. Produce videos and/or documents that can be used by LPS to train hiring managers and screening committees in the 2023-2024 hiring cycle.